

BOOK REVIEWS

Cassell, Kay Ann, and Hiremath, Uma. **Reference and Information Services in the 21st Century: An Introduction.** 1st ed. New York, NY, and London, UK: Neal-Schuman Publishers, 2006. 378 p. Softcover \$65.00. ISBN: 1-55570-563-4.Ⓢ

Authors Kay Ann Cassell and Uma Hiremath, two experienced librarians, have teamed up to create *Reference and Information Services in the 21st Century: An Introduction*, a rich and versatile text that introduces the general concept of reference, serves as a useful guide to reference materials, and provides an overview of the current state of reference and its potential future directions. Arranged in four major sections, the book also tackles the fundamental concepts of reference, major reference sources, special topics in reference, and the skills necessary to develop and manage a reference collection.

Opening with an overview of reference and including a quick, but informative nod to its history, the first three chapters of the text focus on providing reference services and cover key fundamental topics varying from how to conduct a proper reference interview to how to design an appropriate database search strategy. This opening section is reminiscent of Bopp and Smith's textbook, *Reference and Information Services: An Introduction* [1]. In this vein, new librarians may find Cassell and Hiremath's text especially helpful for their first few weeks at the reference desk. However, beyond these three introductory chapters, the text quickly sheds its resemblance to a textbook and becomes a guide to important print and electronic reference sources, making it a handy reference desk tool for a wide range of users.

The bulk of the text, and perhaps the most valuable nine chapters of the book, introduces a wide variety of classic and cutting-edge reference sources. The reference resources are divided into nine chapters depending on the type of question that they would help a librarian answer. For example, chapter eleven would be useful to a librar-

ian who needed help "Answering Questions about the Lives of People—Biographical Information Sources" (p. 199). This innovative arrangement will help a busy librarian quickly access necessary resources.

Each of the nine resource chapters include a wide variety of sample reference questions, major relevant reference sources, collection development suggestions, and ways to specifically evaluate reference resources. Additionally, each resource chapter concludes with a lengthy but practical listing of the recommended resources introduced throughout each chapter, suggestions for further reading, and works cited. These resource listings are extensive and highlight both print and electronic resources, which often extend beyond standard familiar sources. Also, these resource lists feature a balance of subscription and free resources, emphasizing government, academic, and nonprofit information sources. Lastly, to keep the text up to date, this book has a dedicated companion Website, which features biannual updates.

The nine resource chapters present information resources geared to answer questions on topics varying from current events to word etymology. Health information resources are included, but unfortunately they share a chapter with law and business resources. Most seasoned medical librarians would be familiar with the majority of classic resources that are introduced, like PubMed and MedlinePlus, but they may also find themselves pleasantly surprised by a few new resources that are worth further investigation and perhaps even adding to their collections. Because of the relatively small but proportionate amount of medical resource coverage, this text may not be regularly useful for medical librarians. However, medical librarians not necessarily used to answering questions about business or even travel may find this text invaluable when those rare questions do arise. Additionally, those medical librarians who serve a broad spectrum of patrons, which

for example, may include health care consumers or public health students, may find this text and its wide variety of reference resources useful.

Following the extensive resource chapters, the authors delve into special reference topics, which include: how to use the Internet as a reference tool, to conduct reader's advisory services, to work with children and young adults, and to conduct user instruction in the reference department. Both chapters that cover reader advisory and youth services are written by Mary Chelton, an author who is not otherwise identified. Chelton's writing style blends seamlessly with that of Hiremath and Cassell and provides useful insight into these two topics, which perhaps may not be immediately valuable to medical librarians.

Although somewhat quickly addressed, the coverage of user instruction is thoughtful and practical and encourages librarians to take advantage of the "opportunity to teach our users how the library works" (p. 273). In this section, the authors succinctly explain the concept of information literacy and address one-on-one instruction methods, the use of technology in teaching, and the assessment and evaluation of bibliographic instruction. To supplement this brief exploration of this vast topic, readers are provided with an extensive listing of Web and print resources, which include both seminal articles and current research.

In the final major section of the text, the authors examine the challenges of developing and managing reference collections and services. Divided into three major topics, including selecting and evaluating reference materials, managing reference departments, and assessing and improving reference services, this section of the text is the densest and may be most appropriate for a head of reference or reference coordinator.

Not surprisingly, the authors conclude with a discussion of the future of reference and information science. The authors present a positive future view and discuss sev-

eral new reference models and concepts, such as roving librarians and virtual reference services. This concluding section is appropriately brief as the topic of the future is prevalent throughout the text, which will hopefully leave librarians energized with new ideas and resources to apply to the future of their own reference service.

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Reference

1. Bopp RE, Smith LC. Reference and information services: an introduction. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 2001.

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Evolving Internet Reference Resources. Edited by William Miller and Rita M. Pellen. Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Information Press, 2006. 536 p. \$49.95. ISBN: 978-0-7890-3025-2. ☺

According to the editor, "this volume is in many ways a successor to *Academic Research on the Internet: Options for Scholars and Libraries*" (p. 1) [1]. *Evolving Internet Reference Resources* compiles articles published in the *Journal of Library Administration*, volume 43, numbers 3/4, and volume 44, numbers 1/2. The explosive growth of information resources on the Internet has created interest that this text addresses in a wide-ranging exploration of the highly diverse subject areas that are available on the Internet. Covered areas vary from researching the arts to film studies to online mapping resources to consumer health. *Evolving Internet Reference Resources* targets librarians and researchers seeking reference-quality information on the Web. It is designed to be useful to novice and mature researchers alike.

Chapter authors generally offer short introductions to subject areas, followed by annotated lists of Web resources. Cited Web resources are

from free and fee-based sites. Some authors do a better job than others at noting whether Web resources are free or proprietary. A few of the authors offer a detailed overview of a subject area but do not annotate the Web resources they present.

Much of the book focuses on humanities and social sciences Internet resources that may be of limited utility in many health sciences library. Subject areas that in some way overlap health sciences disciplines will likely be most interesting. Health sciences librarians may be particularly interested in the following chapters: "Exploring LGBTQ Online Resources," "Accessing Legal and Regulatory Information in Internet Resources and Documents," "A Guide to Online Map and Mapping Resources," and "Searching of Our Surroundings: Looking at the Environment from the Internet." Most health sciences librarians would find little new information in the chapters on consumer health and nursing resources.

From a professional development perspective, the most useful chapter may be "Frontiers of Effort: Librarians and Professional Development Blogs." This chapter introduces new blog readers to interesting or useful blogs on librarianship. Melissa Laning, Catherine Lavalley-Welch, and Margo Smith identify general library-oriented blogs, such as librarian.net, and more targeted blogs, such as *The Handheld Librarian*.

In the chapter, "Creating a Web Resource: African American Kentuckian Profiles," Reinette F. Jones shares her experience developing a Website to meet repeated reference requests in an area with limited Web-based information. This chapter offers guidance on building subject-specific Web pages to meet the information needs of users in any library.

Evolving Internet Reference Resources serves as a useful pathfinder for librarians who routinely field inquiries on highly disparate subject areas outside of the health sciences disciplines. However, this work would be of limited utility in a reference department that is rarely

asked non-health sciences-related queries. Because the chapters were simultaneously published in *Journal of Library Administration*, it would be easy to review the table of contents of the volumes at the publisher's Website or search the journal issues for articles on subjects of interest. With the ever-changing nature of the Internet, a percentage of the referenced Websites will become static, disappear, or change uniform resource locators (URLs), making this monograph dated in fairly short order. The book is also available in hard cover.

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Reference

1. Laurence H, Miller W, eds. Academic research on the Internet: options for scholars and libraries. New York, NY: Haworth Information Press, 2000.

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Groen, Frances K. **Access to Medical Knowledge: Libraries, Digitization, and the Public Good.** Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2007. 281 p. \$55.00. ISBN: 13: 978-0-8108-5272-3. ☺

Access to Medical Knowledge is both a chronological and topical review of the history of medical librarianship. What makes it different is the author's personal interest in what drives the profession and her exhaustive tracing of the consistency of professional commitment through the decades. Frances K. Groen wonders why librarians do what they do and what values underlie their commitment to provide medical information to all who want it. She traces the strong commitment of the profession to serve the public good through what she identifies as three core values: "Acting in the public good by providing access to health information for all who need to use it, educating users in accessing information, and pre-

serving the history of medical and health science" (p. 93).

She offers some insight into whether these core values are unique to the medical librarian and illustrates quite clearly how they have withstood years of challenges. Through this review of the medical librarian profession, Groen illustrates the importance of these core values in each segment of time. She points out how they have survived and surfaced in times of economic hardships, immense technological and environmental changes, and pressures to learn new skill sets.

The book itself is divided into four parts. Part I addresses the profession of the medical librarian, its value system, and the commitment of this system to serving the public good. Part II takes the reader through the inception and early days of the profession, the medical librarian from 1900 to 1940, the state of the profession during the war and after from 1940 to 1960, and finally the years of growth from the 1960s to the 1990s. Within these segments, the author chronicles the origins of the profession and notes the strong relationship with physicians and the history of medicine. She brings front and center the establishment of the Medical Library Association, the building of the National Library of Medicine, and, of course, the passage of the Medical Library Assistance Act of 1965. She traces the significance of these events to the growth of the profession. This part ends with the economic growth in North America, which fostered the birth of many new medical schools and greater interest in medical education, which in turn contributed to a greater emphasis on the role of the medical library.

Part III speaks to "medical libraries in the age of the Internet" (p. v). At this juncture the author veers away from chronological order and shifts to a topical approach. She explains that it is the rapid change the Internet brings and its fast-paced environment that drives a topical approach. Many of the topics happened simultaneously and are not specific to only one date. The author relates the impact

the Internet has had on the profession and libraries and devotes discussion to the introduction of digitization, the emergence of consumer and patient information on the Internet, and the changing approach to clinical medical information due to the Internet. While these topics are not new to any medical librarian working in the field today, it is helpful to read about them related and juxtaposed to the origins of the profession. Once again, readers are presented with how core values continue to support the profession's ability to meet the changes and challenges of the present years.

Finally, part IV presents the changes in the economics of scientific and medical information as it has evolved and the impact that these changes have had on traditional library services. Every library and librarian today grapples with the decisions of print versus electronic in some form. Every librarian is conscious of the chaotic and uncertain environment that libraries find themselves in. Here, the author provides discussion about the open access movement and other alternative methods of information delivery. Here, the reader will find narrative on copyright in today's library.

The author takes readers through to 2006 and notes the uncertainties confronting the profession moving forward. Resolutions are not apparent or easily attained. Will medical librarians be able to continue their commitment to these three core values and to serve the public good?

Groen does not attempt to offer answers, nor should she be expected to do so. She notes that the challenges ahead are great and, because of this, offers advice. She recommends that we realize the challenges librarians face are not theirs alone, but belong to all segments of the profession. Librarians will need to partner with other parts of the profession, university and public librarians are just two examples, to meet these challenges together. "What is required is a collective intelligence to address the magnitude

of the challenge that lies ahead" (p. 263).

This book is well researched. Each chapter has an extensive bibliography for further reading, and a complete index is at the end of the book. Her style of writing is easy, and the book itself flows pleasantly along. Although Groen is documenting the history of the development of the medical librarian profession, this book should find an audience among all librarians, not just medical librarians. The core values that Groen identifies are actually applicable across all segments of the profession and should interest library science students as well. The author's many years of medical library experience and knowledge have produced a book that is enjoyable as well as informative.

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Managing Electronic Records. Edited by Julie McLeod and Catherine Hare. London, UK: Facet Publishing, 2005. 202 p. \$89.95. ISBN: 1-85604-550-1.

Does Google offer a legitimate alternative to MEDLINE's structured, indexed records? What is the optimal metadata set for digital library records? Where secure patient access to the medical record is available, how can the display of content best facilitate consumer health objectives? In these and many other ways, the concept of the electronic record permeates the world of the twenty-first century medical librarian.

This book, written and edited primarily from the archivist's point of view, provides succinct but comprehensive coverage of many record-related issues, including standards, technologies, preservation systems, research, and professional training, as well as both private and public sector case studies. With

authors and examples from Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, the United States, and China, it provides a wide and potentially instructive international perspective. The salient question for this reviewer is, "What can those of us who sit squarely on the library side of the information world learn from our colleagues on the archives side?"

The book begins promisingly enough with John McDonald's chapter on the "wild frontier" of the electronic office environment, which persists today despite the hopeful expectations he remembers expressing over a decade ago. What he describes is a universal milieu instantly recognizable not just to information professionals but to anyone in the white collar world, with electronic document and records management systems that too frequently become dumping grounds for email messages, attachments, and miscellaneous documents. In making a case for change, he notes that sophisticated and computer-literate younger users have higher expectations. These include direct access to records kept by government and other institutions and an interest in relationship building. For readers who provide information resources or services in the age of electronic journals and the blog, these requirements easily evoke the impact that ubiquitous Internet access and Web 2.0 are having on the library.

From the beginning, the editors develop several main themes, a couple of which are general enough to pass for conventional wisdom: the importance of continuing education and of investing in knowledge and skills as well as in technology and the crucial role that support from high-level management plays in ensuring the success of large projects that affect the organization as a whole. Other themes may or may not resonate with librarians, depending on length of their professional memory and the nature of their work. With catalog conversion largely a fait accompli, the legitimacy of the electronic record per se as an authentic functional entity, and not

just as a surrogate for a paper record, is now so far from being an issue as to be axiomatic. While systems librarians and those responsible for more purely transactional functions such as circulation, collection development, and document delivery may readily grasp the idea of using the organization's records to meet business requirements, the book's fundamental focus on knowledge management for the organization is largely irrelevant to reference librarians, to whom bibliographic records are the most important ones. As far as a reference librarian is concerned, for example, the power of metadata is in its potential to facilitate resource discovery and improve information retrieval, not to manage records and accomplish business objectives. Catalogers, who are record managers but not necessarily organizational knowledge managers, may find fewer relevant chapters than colleagues on the transactional side, but more than reference librarians.

Some of the material is of general interest to information professionals. A chapter on research trends chronicles the shift in the last twenty years from managing records as electronic entities to managing their content. Anyone whose personal files include documents created with obscure or out-of-date software will appreciate the chapter on digital preservation, which articulates the requirements for a persistent systems architecture that protects data integrity through migration of data from one software format to the next. An esoteric postmodern cultural analysis of record creation and management in pre- and post-apartheid South Africa in a chapter on ethics and electronic record making finds disappointingly little difference between the two eras. It does, however, manage to remind the reader that those who make and tend records wield a tremendous club: the power to shape the truth.

So should librarians expect to learn a lot about electronic records from this book? It depends. But in a final chapter, the editors wrap things up with a rousing charge

relevant to all parts of the information world: The solutions we have may be imperfect and may not be for the long term, but we still have to plunge in and "be comfortable with change and uncertainty."

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Anderson, Charles R., and Sprenkle, Peter. **Reference Librarianship: Notes from the Trenches.** Binghamton, NY: Haworth Information Press, 2006. 258 p. Softcover \$24.95. ISBN: 978-0-7890-2948-5. Hardcover \$49.95. ISBN: 978-0-7890-2947-8. ©

Purportedly a realistic portrayal of what it is like to interact with patrons on a daily basis, *Reference Librarianship: Notes from the Trenches* instead provides the reader with a distorted view of reference desk work. Coauthored by Charles R. Anderson, a retired reference librarian with many years of experience in "the trenches," and Peter Sprenkle, a reference librarian in a large public library, this book captures most of the pain and very little of the glory of contemporary reference librarianship.

Each chapter includes several pages of entries from the Ref Grunt blog that lists every reference desk transaction that came to Sprenkle for a year, beginning in May of 2003. Half of these entries are not included in the book due to space concerns. The blog can be found in its entirety at <http://refgrunt.blogspot.com>. Added to less often since 2004, Ref Grunt is available as of this writing. The authors neglect to say how entries have been chosen for inclusion, but it seems, that although not every daily entry is included, those that are included in the book are a representative sampling and are replicated in an unexpurgated form as stated in the preface.

The daily entries include the full gamut of questions, requests, and complaints a reference grunt might experience serving the public. For instance, on Thursday, July 17, 2003, a sampling of the transactions includes requests for variety of materials, from the penal code to newspapers to nursing career books. Sprenkle listened to a detailed description of problems with microfilm readers, was asked to find books on the dangers of red meat, signed up forty-one people for the Internet, and kicked two kids out of the stacks for running. The printers were behaving well that day: he only had to provide printer advice twice. The inclusion of the transactions that challenge a Ref Grunt's wits, patience, and sanity are essential to a realistic description of reference librarianship. However, because most of the transactions only record the patron's initial request, one is often left wondering how the transaction was completed. Imagine how much more insightful and informative this book would be if Sprenkle had recorded how he handled the request for a book on the dangers of red meat? What did the patron mean by "dangers?" Was a book the best source of such information? Was a book available? Was the patron satisfied? Without such information, readers, including the intended audience of library school students and administrators, are not privy to the factors that contribute to the sense of immense satisfaction or frustration that often accompanies such transactions.

Brief essays based on these transactions and online discussion groups introduce each chapter. Written by Anderson, they are in-

tended to "raise questions for debate rather than answer them" (p. ix). Topics varying from technology's "revenge effect" to the trend in a retail approach to library services are issues that have a direct effect on daily reference work, but Anderson does not raise any issues that have not been debated before and does not offer a fresh perspective. Illustrating his concerns regarding the current state of reference librarianship and the ways changing user expectations and technological advances have affected life behind the reference desk, even Anderson acknowledges that the essays appear to take "a dim view of some trends in public library service" (p. 245). The comments that follow this remark do offer some encouraging words regarding the future of the profession, but in the context of his remarks and observations in the essays, these few words sound like an afterthought.

As someone with five years of recent experience at a reference desk in a large public library, this reviewer can relate to Sprenkle's frustrations with the many "mundane or absurd" transactions he must cope with, as well as the challenges that concern Anderson. The authors state that this book "paints a clear picture of the field for library school students, provides emotional and philosophical support to practitioners, and reminds administrators of what life was like on the 'front lines'" (p. ix). However, the image that the authors have presented the reader is a limited view, and, although it depicts the problems and challenges that those in the profession face, it does not adequately describe the positive as-

pects of reference librarianship. Current practitioners may find some solace in the acknowledgment of the common challenges reference librarians face and may find some comic relief in this book. However, anyone considering librarianship as a career might be discouraged by the presented view. This is a serious concern in a profession in which many are expected to reach retirement age in the next thirteen years and in which almost half of the librarians under the age of forty-five leave for better-paying jobs in finance, academia, and government [1]. The authors have also missed a unique opportunity to describe to out-of-touch administrators what really goes on at the reference desk.

A number of librarians have blogs that offer potential reference librarians, current practitioners, and administrators clearer pictures of the field. Although the depiction of the challenges of reference librarianship in a public library is useful to those considering reference librarianship in any setting, it would be most appropriate for large collections that provide other works with alternate views of the profession. This book is not recommended for the professional collections of health sciences libraries.

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Reference

1. Carmichael A. The changing role of librarians: as new technologies revolutionize job, low pay could hinder growth. *Wall Street J* (Eastern ed.) 2007 Jan 2:B.8.

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